

Characters

- **BALSERO 1** Youngest: In his 20s. Capable, well built, experienced in rafts and sailing. Gentle and unassuming.
- **BALSERO 2** Middle: In his 30s. Thoughtful and responsible. Good natured. Arranges and provides. Stocky. A widower with a 4 year old daughter.
- **BALSERO 3** Oldest: Late 40s. Stocky, not very bright, cares and worries about everyone, over-zealous.
- **BALSERO 4** Middle: Capable, well-built, experienced in boats and sailing.
- **BALSERA A** Youngest: Good looking, cheerful.
- **BALSERA B** Middle: Intelligent, practical, physically strong, a sense of humor.
- **BALSERA C** Oldest: Married to Balsero 3. Very much like him.

A scrim on the back wall and sides will permit projections of films or slides with titles (a smaller screen) or additional scenery (slides of film) using the total area of the back wall and sides (a calm or stormy ocean, a beach).

On each down-stage side and on the back corners there are giant paper-mache waves which resemble Japanese engravings in style.

Against the back wall center there is a platform with as many *taburete* chairs as there are actors. When they are not performing they will sit there.

Downstage center there is the main platform. About two feet from the edge of this platform there is a railing. On the back, front, and sides of the railing there are entrances. Along the upstage side of the platform there is a step about 10x10 and the width of the platform. On the downstage side of the platform there is another step about 10x10 and the width of the platform that leads to the stage floor level. On the upstage side of the raft there is a platform approximately 6x6 and about 8higher than the upstage step. There is also a railing around this platform with openings on the sides. To the right and left sides of the raft there are the upper part of the oars (as many as there are performers minus one) which are not visible until they are lifted up and are attached in such a way as to move like oars pushing against water. The platform will have the capacity for different levels of oscillating motion. In the center of the platform there is a slit that will hold a keel. On the platform is a living room set: Two armchairs and one or two rocking chairs of black mahogany with black caning and a small table with a crochet doily, a couple of framed portraits, a small black vase with painted flowers, paper flowers and a paper pad and pencil. Against the side walls there are as many short stools as there are performers. Against a wall there is a cardboard box that contains the parts for a distillery mentioned in the text. A stick and a rag will be concealed behind the platform or by the stools. The Spanish text will be projected on the screen.

Act 1

Act 1, Scene 1: On a Small Boat

FIRST PART

PROLOGUE

1. ON A SMALL BOAT

(BALSERO 2 is sitting on the rocking chair to the right. BALSERA B is sitting on the rocking chair to the left)

Image 1: Stop-and-go frames of a film. An immense ocean. The camera begins to close in on a rowboat. The waves become larger and larger.

(The lights on the platform begin to come up.

The scene starts.

The film continues through the following and goes into Image 2)

BALSERO 1

If you go out to sea on a rowboat you are frightened.

Out at sea the vessel is frail.

In a storm, one single wave can destroy it.

Image 2: A stop-and-go film: The storm sets in. It envelopes and over powers the boat. Pieces of the boat fly off. The film continues through the following and goes into Image 3.

Act 1, Scene 2: On a Lake

2. ON A LAKE

Image 3: Stop-and-go close-up film of an oar pushing gently against calm waters. The camera zooms out gradually showing more of the boat, then the lake. The film continues through the following scene.

BALSERO 3

Not in a lake. In a lake the oar prevails. The water yields.

In a lake, the oar, small as it is, commands.

The water gives in, it yields.

Not out at sea.

Out at sea --the oar surrenders. It bends, submits.

The boat is at the mercy of the wind and the sea.

(The film fades off)

Act 1, Scene 3: The Risk

3. THE RISK

(ALL but BALSERO 2 stand in the back in a line)

BALSERO 2

He, who goes to sea on a raft risks his life. And the life of his children, of his wife.

Of his mother, his sister, his friend, his neighbor.

Of those who chance it.

Some set out and return.

When they feel the power of the sea they return.

After leaving,

someone says,

(Those in the back echo BALSERO 2s gestures and words)

I'm not going.

Not going.

I'm going back. I won't go.

I'm going back.

I can't swim.

It's too hard.

(He points to an imaginary child, hands open. THE OTHERS, standing in the back, repeat his gestures and echo his words)

She can't swim.

The kid can't swim.

They return.

He dreamt of leaving the country and couldn't.

Sometimes, he who builds the raft, goes out. And it's he who wants to return.

He, who worked hard to make the raft, leaves, and then says, You go on, I'm not going. I can't. He returns the raft to the beach.

They had already left, but he made them go back.

(Indicating to the imaginary child with open hands)

The kid.

(HE looks at them, hoping they will understand)

I can't. You go on. Leave me on the beach.

Come, sweetheart.

(HE is despondent, stretches his hand towards the child. His hand closes as if holding her hand. HE speaks to imaginary people on the raft)

Good luck... to you.

(HE waves, turns and walks up with his arm outstretched as if holding the child)

Act 2

Act 2, Scene 1: Authors Scene 4 Plans and Arrangements

SECOND PART

PREPARING FOR THE CROSSING

4. PLANS AND ARRANGEMENTS

Image 4: The same subject as Image 1 (closing in on a rowboat, waves getting larger) filmed from a different angle. It starts out-of-focus and very slowly goes into focus through the following scene.

(In B's house. BALSERO 1 is sitting on the armchair to the right. BALSERA B is sitting on the armchair to the left. The doorbell rings)

BALSERA B

Someone knocks.

(BALSERA B walks towards the up right area)

BALSERO 1

I'm in a friend's house. Someone knocks.

(BALSERA A enters)

BALSERA B

A neighbor.

Image 5: On stage: B and A walk to center. B points both hands towards A, then towards 1. A and I bow. B offers A the rocking chair to the left. THEY BOTH sit. There is a moments silence)

B turns to look at A

A turns to look at 1

B turns to look at 1

1 turns to look at A

B turns to look at A

Image 6: On stage: A walks to B's side. A leans over and puts a key in B's hand.

BALSERA A

(In a whisper)

Take this key.

(Closing B's hand)

Tomorrow, knock on my door.

(Gesturing)

Knock knock.

(SHE puts her ear to an imaginary door)

If I don't answer, it means I left.

Use the key, go in, and take what you want.

If I'm not in, it means I'm gone.

BALSERO 1

From many sources we heard many were leaving on boats and rafts.

Image 7: Film of rafters navigating a river with a current.

Image 8: On stage: There is a knock on the door. BALSERA b is starting to go to the door as BALSEROS 2, 3 and BALSERA C enter and standing a group. BALSERO 1 looks at his watch)

BALSERO 1

Others arrive at two.

Image 9: On stage: Through the following sequence, each addresses the person who just spoke.

(2, 3 and C walk towards the platform, stand in a group and turn to A)

(2, 3 and C walk towards 1 and stand in a group)

(BALSERO 1 stands. BALSERA C sits. BALSERO 1 indicates BALSERA A to sit)

BALSERA C

We want to make a raft. we have the materials-but don't knowhow to make it.

BALSERO 1

(To the audience)

I grew up in a sea port. And from childhood I knew how to make rafts. I could navigate them with sail and oar, in storms and rough weather.

Image 10: Now the waters have turned to rapids in the film.

Later, I became a Geographer. And was assigned to areas with high mountains where wild rivers flow.

BALSERO 1

There I made rafts and navigated them in the rapids.

Here they want my help.

I will help.

Act 2, Scene 2: Authors Scene 5 Bin Ban

5. BIN BAN

BALSERA B

(From the rocking chair)

From the North shore you can leave on a raft. The current helps you. In the South, it doesn't.

In the South the current pulls you back. You row and it pulls you back.

From my town, in the South, you can't go North on a raft.

Nor can you go on a row boat or a sail boat. The current pulls you back again and again.

Never try it on a raft.

You have to go on a boat with a motor. That's why in my town we invented the bin-ban.

Yes, Sir, The bin-ban.

Image 11: On film: An animated drawing illustrates the tearing down of the inside walls, the boat inside the house, the knocking down of the houses façade, the pulling of the boat to the coast, the launching, the bin-ban cemetery and the sailing.

BALSEROS 2 and 3

The bin-ban is a boat made from old metal of old cars bolted down and soldered.

A strong boat.

When they're made you hear bin-ban, bin-ban.

The hammering.

Bin. ban.

And that's why they're called Bin-ban.

BALSERA A

Oh?

BALSERA B

Bin-Ban. The bin-ban is made inside the house.

BALSERA C

... inside?

BALSERA B

The house.

BALSERA B

They knock the inside walls of the house down.

BALSERO 2

Really...

BALSERA B

Yes. And there they make The bin-bans.

Inside the gutted house there are no walls.

There's only a boat.

BALSERO 1

(Showing her the drawing)

Like this?

BALSERA B

Yes. When the moment comes the front wall goes and the boats hauled out.

Some managed to leave. Others not.

In the port there was a cemetery of confiscated bin-bans.

Act 2, Scene 3: Authors Scene 6 The Raft

6. THE RAFT

BALSERO 1

This is the design for the raft.

Image 12: On film: A diagram shows the details, as BALSERO 1 describes them. An arrow moves from place to place, to indicate the parts already drawn.

Image 13: On stage: BALSERO 1 stands. From a distance, HE uses a pointer to indicate the figures as they appear on the screen.

BALSERO 1

Platform of wood. Mast. A big keel. And a helm.

No sides. So the water comes and goes.

underneath two or more inner tubes and blocks of polyurethane. All is covered with thick nylon net.

In a storm we gather the sail and move to the helm. And if not, to the oars. A friend of my cousins is a shipyard carpenter.

BALSERO 1

Hell help.

We'll make it in the yard.

Act 3: Authors Scene 7 Materials, Ways and Means

THIRD PART

BUILDING THE RAFT

7. MATERIALESWAYS AND MEANS

Image 14: On stage: THEY take the furniture off the platform, bring in a keel, a mast, a sail, oars, and a school-chair-top. One ties a piece of fabric to the mast. THEY put the keel through the slit on the platform, set the oars, the mast, the sail, the helm, as THEY mention the parts.

BALSERO 1

They had inner tubes, polyurethane, wood, screws, and drill bits. We needed canvas and resins for gluing. We set out on the task of stealing the canvas from the army warehouse.

The guard, a recruit, friend of a friend, let us bring the truck in the yard.

For 100 pesos we broke a door, and took three bundles of canvas that's used to cover war tanks.

BALSERO 3

Ours was crude. Not too well thought out.

It had an iron frame. We thought it'd make it strong.-Inexperience ---It was heavy.-

(HE holds the school-chair-top)

The helm was the board of a school chair. Like this.

It had a keel. Three tyres: one a Volvo, two from a truck, We covered them with nylon net and canvas. A mast, sail and oars.

BALSERO 1

The first day we stole the canvas. The second and third we built the raft. On the fourth we glued the sheets of polyurethane. And we tightened them with screws.--We made a hem on the canvas. And nailed it to the wooden frame.--It was strong.

Act 4

Act 4, Scene 1: Authors Scene 8 Packing

FOURTH PART

ABOUT TO LEAVE

8. PACKING

Image 15: On film: A close-up of a man (stop-and-go) standing in the water. HE arranges and ties bundles to a raft.

Image 16: On stage: Those on stage do a dance in unison. The movements have a ritual work or exercise quality.

BALSERO 2

About to leave, the bundles tightly packed:

(ALL touch the fingers on the left hand with the right index. As if counting)

Food, medicines, water, gas, special instruments:

(Making a fist with the right hand and bringing the fingers up one at a time)

Compass, matches, thermometer, needle, knife,

(Touching the small finger of the left hand with the index of the right)

sterilized thread

(for wounds).

For seasickness:

(Touching the second finger of the left hand with the index of the right)

Intramuscular in yeccions. Also oral salts for dehydration. Pencil, paper, pen.

Act 4, Scene 2: Authors Scene 9 Others Help

9. OTHERS HELP

Image 17: The blurred close up of a woman's face slowly starts to move into focus during the following. SHE has long thick black hair. SHE wears a long-sleeve black dress.

BALSERO 2

Each to his spot, his place. His rope to be tied when going to sleep in case of bad weather. Not to fall into the sea. A hat to shield from the sun, long-sleeve shirt. Something waterproof in case it rains. Something warm for the cold of the night.

Image 18: The face is now in focus. The mouth is wide open. SHE is calling. A wind instrument does the sound of her voice.

BALSERO 2

Were ready all on the raft. I'm standing in the water. I push it. I'm about to jump up.

I hear a voice. Someone calls. I turn.

Image 19: On film: A woman is running down the beach. SHE holds a shoebox high in the air. SHE calls.

BALSERO 2

A woman comes running. Wait! Wait! She holds a small box, shoe box. She runs, we wait.

She hands me the box.... It moves. She says, It's a pigeon. When you reach land, let it go. They return. They know how... to come home... It'll tell me you're safe.

If not, she wont return. She says.

Shes worried.

Another lady runs. Gives usher umbrella. And says,

For the sun.

Act 4, Scene 3: Authors Scene 10 On the Raft

10. ON THE RAFT

BALSERO 3

We made it in one day.--Rushed it, and left;

(THEY all count with their fingers)

my wife, my nephew, a neighbor, my two sons, my daughter, myself.

Image 20: On stage: ALL but BALSERO 3 drop seated on the raft, making a clean stumping sound)

BALSERO 3

(Counting seven fingers)

Seven.

In one raft. And left.

Image 21: As the raft begins to move slightly, BALSERO 3 makes a complete circle, staring at the distance)

Going out, I counted thirty rafts in view.

Happy. Like a day of regatta.

(The stage starts to darken)

In the meantime, From the North, the storm is nearing. And --To it --unavoidably -

the current is driving us.

The storm towards us and we towards the storm.

Act 5: Authors Scene 11 The Storm

FIFTH PART

THE BLACK NIGHT

11. THE STORM

BALSERO 3 AND CHORUS

The sky's gray. And the seas getting rough.

(The movement of the raft starts to increase)

Image 22: On film: Through the following, an ocean in turmoil is projected all over the stage. Powerful fans blow on their hair, clothes and fabric on the mast. There is the sound of a roaring ocean.

On each side the boys are rowing.

They row and row. And the surge increases.

They row. It increases.

And they row. And it increases.

Image 23: On stage: THEY hold on to each other, make throwing up sounds and roll on the floor as the ocean throws them.

A wave lifts up the raft and slams it against the water.

Up again and --it slams down again. It lifts it up and it hurls it against the water.

And up and it's hurled against the water again.

And again the raft goes up and down again.

It's at the mercy of the waves.

The wind blows and it beats on our eyes.

And it beats on our ears, and our skin.

The wind beats and beats.

And it beats on our heads. And the wind beats on our nerves.

Image 24: There is the sound of an explosion. The raft jerks violently. THEY let out a scream.

Aaah! A tyre bursts! Couldn't bear the weight! Couldn't-bear-the-weight!

And the pounding! And the pounding!

It blows up! It blows up! Were sinking! Were sinking! Oh! Were sinking! Were sinking! Were sinking!

Image 25: On stage: THEY are hysterical. Their voices are shrill. THEY move according to what they describe.

Panic! Hold on! Crawl! To the center!

Hold on! Hold on!

Image 26: There is the sound of a helicopter propeller while a searchlight scans the stage. BALSERO 1 starts to make a torch with a stick and a rag.

A helicopter appears! A helicopter circles above us! It's looking for rafters! It's looking for rafters! For helpless rafters in the dark. It's looking for us! It's looking for us! It's-looking-for-us! Heeere we aaare!!! Here we aaa aa a a aa are! Here we aaa aa a a aa are!

BALSERO 3

My -son -starts to -make -a -torch. In a hurry.

CHORUS

(To the helicopter)

Here we aaaare! Here we aa aa re! Can't you see us?

Image 27: On stage: Making figures 8s looking at the floor.

BALSERO 3 AND CHORUS

We look for matches. Look for matches!

(THEY all stamp on the floor at a given interval as they're making figure 8s looking at the floor for the matches)

BALSERO 3 AND CHORUS (Continued)

We look for the matches. Look for the matches! To light the torch! To light the torch!

Image 28: On stage: THEY stand still and feel their pockets as THEY sob, cry and wail. THEY continue the stamping.

They're not here! They're not here!

Not here! Not here!

Where are the matches? Where are the matches?

(THEY raise their hands to their heads in despair)

They fell in the-water!

They fell in the water!!

They -fell -in the wat -er!!!

The matches are not here --They must have fallen in the w a t e r!!!

Aaaahhhhh!!!

The -matches -have fallen -

-in! -the! -water!

(THEY stamp on the floor)

Aaaahhhhh!!!

Image 29: On stage: THEY all drop to the floor and beat on the floor with their fists.

BALSERO 3 AND CHORUS (Continued)

Aaaahhhhh!!!

... We have no matches!!!

Where are they? Where are they?

(THEY raise their hands to their heads in despair)

We can't light the torch! We-cant-light-the-torch!

(THEY pull their hair)

They fell in the-water!!

They -fell -in the water!!!

They can't see us!
They can't see us!
The helicopter
can't see us.

(Looking for the matches so feebly disconcerted)

Where--are--the matches? Where--are--the matches?

Image 30: THEY raise their hands and arms slowly in despair. Then THEY start squirming and convulsing on the floor.

They fell in the water!

In-the-sea!!

They fell in the sea!!!

(There is a pause)

BALSERO 3 AND CHORUS (Continued)

The -helicopter -is leaving. It's -leaving... Didn't -see uuus.

It's gone. It-is-gonnne. It... has... left... us... to

drown

in

darkness.....

(THEY sing a song without words which is composed of crying, sobbing, whimpering and wailing)

Sound.-Then, there is the sound of the water against the raft. The crying begins to subside and the sound of the water on the raft is more audible. Then, in addition, the sound of rowing and the murmur of voices approaching is heard.

Image 31: THEY shift to face upstage. THEY put their hand to their ear and listen. While the sound of rowing and the murmur of voices increases in volume, on their knees and elbows, THEY take two quick steps towards the upstage in unison -stop -turn their heads to one side, put their hand to their ear and listen and turn their heads upstage to look. Then, THEY repeat the action to the other side. Then, THEY turn upstage again, take two quick steps (on knees)upstage and the complete sequence is repeated several times.

Image 32: On film: People clustered on a raft. The camera closes in on their faces. There is the sound of waves beating on the boat.

BALSERA B AND CHORUS

A raft appears. It comes closer! And closer!

Closer! And closer! Closer!

And closer! It comes closer! And closer! Closer! They-offer-help!! Yes! Yes! They will help. Yes! Yes! Yes! Thank you!
Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yeees!

Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

Thank you! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yeees!

Yes! Yes! Yes! Thank you! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yeees!

Image 33: On film: The boys jumping in the water and tying the two rafts together.

On Stage: BALSEROS 1 and 2 roll off the raft upstage.

BALSERA B AND CHORUS (Continued)

The boys jumping the water, and tie the rafts together. And we-are-saved! Were saved! Safe and sound! Safe and sound! Safe! Safe! Safe!

Image 34: THE BOYS join the rest. THEY arrange themselves to lie down close together to be further away from the edge. BALSERO 3 sits apart.

BALSERO 3

Good people. They risked their lives for us.

In total were fifteen and two children. Too many. And yet, they came and rescued us. And rescue us! And rescue us!! And rescue us!!! Good people!!!

Image 35: On stage: THEY all jump and stir simultaneously as if by a rough wave. Some lean over the edge and throw up. THEY return to a position of rest. BALSERO 3 is still sitting.

We, tired. But safe! Some seasick and throwing up.

I, tired, nervous, exhausted, keep watch. Others rest. I don't.

I worry. Someone may get careless and fall in. Or let an arm drop in the water

And let a shark tear it off.

A father worries. With reason!! With reason.

(THEY turn to their side and snore)

ZZZZZZZZZ

A father worries. With reason.

ZZZZZZZZZ

A father worries... With reason... he worries...

BALSERO 3

(Despondent)

That's why I worry.

(There is a sudden increase in the sound of the storm and the movement of the raft)

Image 36: On film: A stormy ocean. A 15 foot boat is moving towards the camera. It is misty and raining.

Image 37: On stage: The storm starts increasing in force. As THEY sing the snoring song THEY start inching towards the upstage step. THEY try to advance by crawling, walking on their knees, on all fours, by placing one knee on the floor with their hands, then, the foot of the other leg, then, falling as they are trying to place the foot of the first leg on the floor and falling. When THEY reach the step, they either lean on it, lie on it, or sit on it. BALSERA B and BALSERO 4 are center.

Image 38: On film: At the same time the camera closes in on a group standing close together on the prow of the boat. Their faces are indistinguishable in the dark. THEY could be the same as those on the raft. THEY are in similar positions to those in the raft.

CHORUS

(Their boo-hoos are strong, like cursing)

Boo!! Hoo!

It's difficult to stand.

Act 6

Act 6, Scene 1: Authors Scene 12 Adrift

SIXTH PART

AFTER THE STORM

12. ADRIFT

BALSERA B

Boo!! Hoo!

(The storm starts to subside. The movement of the raft begins to decrease and the lights begin to get brighter)

It's calming down. But it isn't any better. Our motor broke down and also did the compass.

CHORUS

(Their boo-hoos are strong, like cursing)

Boo!! Hoo!

We were lost adrift, without water, without food. Dying hunger and thirst. Already the sun dried the mouth. It burns the mouth. It's dry.

(THEY try to breathe and fan their mouths with their hands)

Boo!! Hoo! The skin burning. The mouth in flames.

Dehydrated, feeble, not able to stand on our feet from exhaustion, hunger, thirst. Water all around and yet none to drink. Water, water, all around, and not a drop to drink.

(They cough)

Thirst, thirst. The throat dry. No food to feed the flesh which starts to hang off the bones.

Adrift!! Going where the currents take us.... Lost... in... the... Gulf... aimlessly... floating. No water... no food...

Waiting to die... in the waters... of the Gulf.

Boooh! Hoooh!

Not able to stand on our feet. Water...

(THEY drop to the floor)

Water...

(THEY open their mouths wide and try to breathe)

The air burns to breathe.

Water...

Water...

Act 6, Scene 2: Authors Scene 13 A Passing Ship

13. A PASSING SHIP

Image 39: On stage: THEY start crawling on hands and knees and lifting themselves up to scan the sky.

CHORUS

Forever looking for birds in the sky. A sign we may be nearing land.

(THEY are now all facing upstage)

Looking in the horizon for the shape of land.

Image 40: A small cut-out of a freighter starts to travel from right to left across the line of the horizon. A musical version of a ships engine is heard. THEY put their hands against their foreheads as visors.

What is that? We see something in the distance. Something... Yes! A ship! A ship! A ship in the distance! Quickly!

Image 41: Some start banging on the floor, hitting metal pipes, screaming, and making any other sound they can make as others follow the movement of the ship with their heads and torso.

We make noises! We call! Scream! Help! Help!

(THEY all look at the ship and make sad murmuring sounds of prayer and hope as the ship starts to disappear)

Ahhhhhhhhhhhh.

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

Image 42: On stage: When the ship disappears they bow their heads disheartened and slowly start taking aimless steps in different directions and drop to the floor again. BALSERO 4 goes to the side and brings the box with the parts for the distiller to the side of the platform.

It's gone. It didn't see us. It's gone. This is our end. Adrift, without water or food. Well die of hunger. Well die of thirst. This is it. This is it. This is it.

BALSERO 4

Calm down! Calm down! It's not the end!

(Through the following, THEY slowly lie on the floor and cover themselves as if shrouding themselves)

CHORUS

This is the end. This is the end.

BALSERO 4

Not the end! Not yet!

CHORUS

This is the end. This is the end.

BALSERO 4

It-is-not-the-end. It-is-not.

CHORUS

Were dying. Were dying.

BALSERO 4

We wont die! Not yet!

CHORUS

Yes, yes, well die! Were already dead!

BALSERO 4

You are not! You are not!

CHORUS

Were dying. Were dying.

BALSERO 4

I tell you you're not!

CHORUS

Dead, dead!

(THEY drop their heads)

ZZZZZZZZZ

Act 7

Act 7, Scene 1: Authors Scene 14 Distilling the Water

SEVENTH PART

SURVIVING

14. DISTILLING THE WATER

BALSERO 4

(Banging on pipes)

Wake up! We have to make a distiller! A distiller! A distiller! A distiller!

(THEY wake up)

CHORUS

How? What? How? How? What?

What? How? What? Ah? Hm? Mmm...

BALSERO 4

Wake up!

(THEY shake their heads and open their eyes)

Were going to distill sea water. Were going to drink distilled sea water!

CHORUS

(Each starts speaking the following at the same time but on a different line, creating a loop. When they reach the end, THEY start again at the top till they have said all the lines)

Nooo. We can't drink sea water. We can die if we do. Sea water wont quench the thirst. It makes you thirstier. It'll make us thirstier. It dehydrates you. It'll dehydrate you. You hear? Well die.

BALSERO 4

Shhhh... Calm down... Well make a distiller...

CHORUS

(More quiet)

How are we going to make a distiller?

BALSERO 4

Like this.

Image 43: On film: The words diagram for a distiller appear as if they are being written in long hand.

Image 44: On stage: Each performer takes a part of the distiller from the box and brings it to the upstage platform. As BALSERO 4 is naming each part, it appears in place in the film, and the performer holding the part follows the instruction described.

BALSERO 4

We tie a string to the can that has the screw-top.

We throw it in the water, and let the can fill up. We take the coil from the broken motor. And tightly fit one end to the scre-to opening of the can with the water.

An empty can will be the stove.

We cut wood from the inside of the boat, and put it in the can which is the stove.

We douse the wood with petrol and light it. It will burn. We place the can with the water over the can which is the stove.

We take the other end of the coil and place it in the small can.

When the water boils the vapor goes up the coil.

As it moves it starts to cool.

As it cools it turns to water.

And starts to drop drop by drop... pure water... Drop by drop.

Not enough to quench the thirst. Only something to bear the wait.

Image 45: On stage: HE starts stabbing the raft. The timing of the words will be adjusted to the rhythm of the stabbing (like the singing of the chain-gang prisoner as he wields his pick)

Sometimes I cry when I sink my knife on the side of our generous mother who suffers her wounds without complaint. How long... How long will she be able to sustain us...? How long... How long before she expires her last breath, and collapses,

and sinks--holding us, her children, in her wounded belly --to the bottom of the sea, wounded and weak, by my own blade.

Each time it dug into her to cut pieces for kindle from her side I thought I heard her weep. But no. She gave her life without complaint. To carry us to safety. Mother vessel... Mother vessel... If were not rescued, before our vessel, succumbs to the fierce attack of my own knife, she will sink to the depth torn to pieces, still holding her brood.

We will die, either of thirst or drowned.

(THEY all sob for a while)

Act 7, Scene 2: Authors Scene 15 A Ship in the Distance

15. A SHIP IN THE DISTANCE

Image 46: A small cut-out of a freighter travels across the line of the horizon from right to left. A musical version of a ships engine and horn is heard. THEY put their hands against their foreheads as visors.

CHORUS

We see something in the distance. Something... Yes! A ship! A ship in the distance! Quickly!

(THEY start banging on the floor, hitting metal pipes, screaming, and making any other sound they can make)

Make noises! Call! Scream! Help! Help!

(THEY turn again and make murmuring sounds of hope and expressions of hope and disappointment as the ship continues to move and disappears)

Hm
mm Hmm
mm
mm
mm Hm
Hm
mm
mm
mm
mm
Hm
mm
mm Hm Hm
mm
mm

Image 47: On stage: When the ship exits they bow their heads and slowly start taking aimless steps in different directions.

CHORUS

It's gone. They didn't see us. Well die of thirst, of hunger. Of hopelessness. We will die.

Image 48: On stage: THEY sit. 10 seconds later there is the sound of a drop falling in the can. THEY do a slow head turn towards the can, walk towards it in unison surrounding it, go on their knees and make mumbling sounds as THEY shake their heads with pleasure. THEY start quickly and gradually the volume increases till it becomes euphoric)

Yes! The sea!! The sea!!! Yes! The very sea gives us water!!!

Image 49: On stage: THEY turn to the can and wait for 3 seconds for the next drop. THEY turn to look at BALSERO 4.

BALSERO 4

To relieve the dryness of the mouth. The burning of the throat.

(During the following scenes there is the slow sound of drops falling. The RAFTERS become progressively weaker and desperate)

Act 7, Scene 3: Authors Scene 16 Sixty Ships

16. SIXTY SHIPS

Image 50: On film: At a distance, different large ships, different angles: large freighters, medium-size ships, fishing boats.

BALSERA C

In twenty seven days sixty ships passed. And didn't stop. They didn't stop.... to see who we were? To see what was wrong? If we were dead? If a life could be saved. Did they ask themselves? Those in it... Did they die? Did they drown?

Act 7, Scene 4: Authors Scene 17 Fishing

17. FISHING

Image 51:

On film: From under water: A shallow lake where plants grow. Leaves float on the surface. Small fish swim around. A hand goes in from above trying to grab a fish. It escapes. Another fish or a group of fish come to view. The hand grabs one.

Image 52: On stage: BALSERA A lies across the raft with her hand on the left side of the raft. SHE holds a kitchen knife. BALSRA C lies across the raft with her hand in the water to the right.

CHORUS

(BALSERA C executes the moves as described)

The shadow of a ship afloat attracts fish.

With a bare hand a small fish for bait.

We tie a string around it, give it a cut and throw it in the water.

The blood attracts the bigger fish. Knife in hand we wait for the fish. Hook it.

And in one fell swoop we hurl it on deck. Then we cook it but not too much. Because the fish in its meat has freshwater.

And cooking it dries it up.

We need more the water of the fish than its meat.

Image 53: THEY all stand in a semi-circle around the fish.

Act 7, Scene 5: Authors Scene 18 Only One Came Near

18. ONLY ONE CAME NEAR

Image 54: On film: Stop-and-go images. An enormous freighter at the distance comes closer and closer. The perspective is that of people at sea level.

CHORUS

A ship comes towards us. Because of pity... or respect for life? It comes to us, finally, an enormous ship comes close to us. It stops.

Some lean over the railing.

They look at us.

We were filled with joy.

And suddenly.

(Pause)

The ship starts moving

and disappears

in the distance.

They left us to die.

Why did they come? Just to look at some who are going to die?

BALSERA B

Why did they leave? Because of indifference?

Did they orders? To leave us there... to die?

Who were they?

Do they live today?

Were they dead?

Can the living and leave them like this?

To see them with their own eyes and leave them like this? To die? Of thirst? Of hunger? Parched by the sun?

Do they think of our bones? Exposed, lying on deck the way they were in the moment of death?

Bones adrift?

Can they hear us?

Can they hear our screams forever?

Act 7, Scene 6: Authors Scene 19 Rowing

19. ROWING

Image 55:

THEY walk to their places on the sides of the raft, pull the oars into place and start rowing gently.

BALSERA C

In the sea, six people have to think like one.

At first its difficult. Each person has an opinion.

But gradually, all their thoughts become one.

CHORUS

In the sea six people must think like one.

At first its difficult.

But gradually, all the thoughts become one.

(THEY row for a while humming a sweet melody)

Act 7, Scene 7: Authors Scene 20 Thirst

20. SED

THIRST

CHORUS

(While they row)

The scorching noon sun came.

And we, without water or food, rowed and rowed against the current.

All the noon sun beat upon us. And we, without water or food, rowed and rowed.

Image 56: BALSERO 2 suddenly and rapidly crawls across the platform, drops his head over the up-stage side of the platform and desperately drinks water. There is the amplified sound of water splashing and his slurping, swallowing and heavy breathing. HE then brings his head on the raft and lies quietly. THEY have stopped rowing. One person turns to him, then another, then another till they have all turned.

(BALSERO 1 goes to him and stands by him)

BALSERO 1

Horacio drank sea water and died.

(HE kneels)

He died on the raft... Like this, close to us.

BALSERO 1 AND CHORUS

On that raft Horacio drank sea water and died

at our side.

He didn't believe because of water one could die.

His throat burned and he thought, it'll quench my thirst. Water is water and it'll quench my thirst.

He seemed to be resting. But then we saw he had died.

You thought water is water and it'll quench your thirst.

Horacio... Horacio...

That's how you died.

(THEY all collapse on the floor sobbing. As the sobbing subsides calm music is heard)

Act 8: Authors Scene 21 Key West

21. CAYO HUESO

KEY WEST

Image 57: A clear blue sky.

On stage: The rafters are sitting by the oars. THEY are turned to face upstage with their hands to their foreheads as visors.

BALSERO 1 AND CHORUS

That's how it was when at a distance we see land

With the strength we have left we row to the beach.

(All except BALSERO 2 stand to the right and left of the raft as THEY sing. THEY bend down as if picking up the raft and moving it to the sand)

We lifted the raft to the sand we went to some ladies who sat on the sand.

Where are we? In Key West.

(Facing front)

Key West.

BALSERO 1

(Taking a piece of paper out of his pocket)

I take out my aunt's number, and I say
Telephone? They point

(THEY all turn their heads upstage)

BALSERO 1 AND CHORUS

A few steps away is a phone.

(THEY go upstage in a group)

I call my family in Hialeah. Someone else calls his in Kendall. Then we call Horacio's family, and we returned to the sand.

(THEY sit at the edge of the platform facing front)

BALSERO 1

We wait.

The ladies didn't question us. But seeing us tired and thirsty

(THEY produce Coca Cola bottles from under the platform)

Image 58: On the back wall a luminous beach with a light green ocean and alight blue green sky with a subtle eerie feeling in both lights and music starts appearing.

offer us Cokes. Thank you. That's very nice.

(THEY drink, burp and nod)

BALSERO 1

It hits the spot.

(Turning to the women)

Thank you. That's very nice.

We wait.

There are moments at sea when you can't tell if you see the sky or the sea.

the blue of the sky is not the blue we call blue.

It's a blue green. You can only see that, when the sea is calm.

It's transparent, almost white. White green.

And its difficult to tell between the sky and the sea.

When the waves come that see-through color is gone.

Horacio's family came for him.

Ours also came for us. Mine from Hialeah, someone else's from Kendall. And Horacio's family arranged for his funeral.

Of all those on the raft Horacio was my best friend. He was of all he was my best friend.

BALSERO 1 AND CHORUS

It's not the blue called blue.

It's a blue green. Which can only be seen in the calm of the sea.

It's a transparent green, almost white. White green.

And its difficult to tell where the sea ends and the sky begins.

(The music continues. THEY hum and drink Coca Cola. A pigeon flies in and lands near them as the lights slowly fade to black)

END OF PLAY